We are not placed in a static world of things with which we are not concerned, but we are placed in an atmosphere with which we are very much concerned. It is an ignorance of the true nature of things that makes us feel we are in a private house or in a secret corner where no one can observe us or know our thoughts and feelings.

We are placed in a reverberating chamber, as it were, wherein even the lightest whisper is magnified through an amplifier that is invisibly placed before us. We are not in a world of dead matter. The world is not dead; it is not made up of inert forces. The world we live in is living, really. It has a vitality and an energy of its own from which we draw the little energy that we have in our own personalities.

Our conscious life in our day-to-day existence is not a static fixation of our personalities in some location on the surface of the earth, but something more flexible, more relatively connected with other persons and things in the world than is apparent on the surface. Our minds in the conscious state of their activities receive the impressions from everything in the world. We have to try to gain a little more knowledge of our own minds than we seem to possess at present. The most difficult thing to understand and study is the human mind.

To a large extent the mind is like a photographic film. The moment it is placed in the proximity of an object, it receives an impression. We have five sense organs with which we perceive or cognise things. Through the avenues of this perception, the eyes, ears and so on, we receive the impressions of different things in the world. You can very well imagine how many impressions the mind would be receiving throughout the day, considering that we have to perceive through the senses countless objects from morning till evening.

These series of perceptions and cognitions create layers of impressions in our own minds, and if this process of perception and piling up of layers of impression goes on for several days, you can imagine what would be the state of your mind; and we have lived for years, not merely for a few days. If we go on perceiving the objects of the
world, and receiving impressions from them for many years, what will happen to the mind? There would be a thick encrustation of these impressions, so that any further perception or cognition through the mind would be conditioned by the already-existing piled-up layer of previous impressions.

We also have reason to believe that we have passed through several lives. We have not lived in this world merely for a few years in this temporal sojourn on this earth plane. We have taken several lives already, passed through various processes of birth and death. This activity of the reception of impressions from outside has been going on since aeons, so that we may safely say that our minds are nothing but a network of these impressions. We cannot, therefore, perceive things in a dispassionate manner. For all practical purposes so far as we are concerned today, it appears that there is no such thing as dispassionate cognition or perception of anything. All perceptions are conditioned by the already-existing *samskaras*, as they are called, the impressions which are subtly laid over the clean plate of the mind.

Now, the impressions that we receive through the perceptual process are not passive in their nature. They are very active powers. While the mind is like a photographic film in some respects, it is not like the film in other respects. The photographic film is passive. Once the impression is made, then there is no further activity there. But in the mind, the impressions that are received activate a further similar process of perception. We sing the same song again and again, as it were, as through a gramophone record, and our previous desires become causative factors of further desires of a similar nature, asking for a similar type of satisfaction with a similar craving, with an added intensity. We become worse and worse, as it were, from day-to-day.

We should disillusion ourselves of the false notion that we are on velvet or on a bed of roses, that we are in a world of milk and honey. It is not so. We are in a very terrible world. We are, as it were, in the lion’s den, where we cannot say what will happen to us. The world we live in is not a silent witness of our existence and activity. It shall bear witness to everything that we think and feel and act. The very walls around us shall speak for or against us. The very planets around us shall record our psychological activities and volitional functions. We are hemmed in from every side by impressions of this kind so that our personality is a composite structure of discrete elements constituted of the psychological stuff, and we are not a compound indivisible being, as we imagine ourselves to be. We can be disintegrated into the components of which we are made, and we shall then cease to be individuals as we appear to be now.

These active impressions that we receive through the sensory perception of objects stimulate a peculiar activity over which we lose control after some time. Then we become automatons. Instead of our consciously and deliberately willing to think in a particular manner, we shall be forced to think in a particular manner. We shall be
driven like slaves or asses by our own subconscious hidden impressions, which we call layers of our own psychic personality. Psychologists and psychoanalysts tell us that our freedom of will is itself a misnomer. While we imagine that we act and think of our own accord, under the choice of our own deliberately directed will, we do not know that we are being driven to think and act in that manner by certain subconscious forces.

There are some people who like only salty dishes and others who like sweets, but they do not know why they like salty dishes or sweet things. They think it is their own will: “Well, I deliberately choose sweets. Nobody compels me to choose them.” But the condition of their liver is the directing factor. The physiological organs control even the act of thinking. Chemical conditions of the alimentary canal have something to say about our preferences, our so-called harmless desires; and vice versa, the mind acts upon the physiological organism.

Our desires gradually become independent in their own way, like a slave controlling a master or like the camel kicking the Arab out of the tent, as we have in Aesop’s fables. In the beginning we were the initiator of our thoughts, but now what has happened is that our thoughts direct us. We have to be under their thumb and act according to impulses over which we have no restraint whatsoever. This is to lose control over one’s own self. And when unconsciously driven motives inside us compel us to act in a particular manner in social life, we find ourselves at sea. When we cannot consciously and intelligently direct our impulses from within, we will not be good social beings. Society will become a nightmare for us.

It is because of this that we suppress our desires. We do not express all our desires in public life, for obvious reasons. The impulses from within which have gained an upper hand and over which we have no control at present are not always acceptable to public conduct and etiquette. There is social taboo of some of our private desires. Because of this taboo from society, from government, from family decorum, from the circumstances of our upbringing, and so on, we deliberately hush these impulses and push them to the bottom of the subconscious level. This process goes on almost every day. We have a double personality: the secret, private individual within, and the public smiling individual outside. While we cry inside, we laugh outside. This is a symptom of psychological ill health.

Most people cannot be happy inside, though they shake hands outside and speak from pulpits. They smile, but they really cannot smile from inside. They are grieved. Sorrow is sitting heavy in their hearts, sorrow that has come upon them on account of the inability to express their personality outside in public life and society. They become neurotic, sick people, and get easily fatigued. They are exhausted even at the least work, and can be irritated at the least opposition or provocation. They are unhappy, to put it succinctly.
The individual has lost control over himself. This is what has happened to us today, to every person in this world. Man is not really man, because how can we call a man a man when he has no power over himself? He cannot direct himself in the way he would like. Not only is he under the thumb of the impulses of the subconscious like a henpecked husband, as it were, but added to this sorrow of being subjected to the impulses, he is made to put on an air of independence in social life outside. This is a double misfortune. When we are really grieving, we cannot tell people that we are grieving. We have to go inside and weep. Nobody will listen to our weeping, and outwardly we must say everything is all right. How can this sort of life go on for a long time? What can be samsara, if not this? Are we happy?

Psychoanalysis tells us that man can be made happy by pulling out the roots of these buried impulses through expression of the same in open social life, which cannot be done easily because society will not allow the expression of all our impulses, so they have systems of mesmerism and subjection of the will of the patient to a physician, and so on, a science which employs methods of pre-association, dream analysis, automatic writing, etc.

The intention behind this science of psychoanalysis is very good and pious indeed. Their theory is that conflict arises within the mind of an individual when there is no conformity between the wish or desire of the individual being and the law of society outside. When our private desires are dissonant with the rules of conduct of public life, there is friction between the individual and the society. We are not happy with society, and society will not pardon us if we express ourselves openly as we like.

This results in an artificial life that each individual is compelled to lead. Everyone has an artificial conduct, which is, really speaking, to be untrue to one’s own self. When the inward character is different from outward conduct, what do we call this state of affairs if not hypocrisy? And if we are to judge an individual in the strict manner, in this manner, the world is nothing but a bundle of hypocrites. No one can be open because you would not like me, and I would not tolerate you. Yet there is a necessity for people to come together, speak together, work together for their own private conveniences and comforts.

The psychoanalytic technique tells us that by bringing out the subconscious layers of private impulses, man can be made normal and healthy. But “What is the definition of normalcy?” is a question that we may have to put before our own selves. What do you mean by ‘normalcy’? How do you say that a person is normal? The psychoanalyst’s definition of normalcy is conformity with reality. And what is reality? That which the society would proclaim as valid and right, that is called reality. So to the psychologist, social life is reality, and anything that is in conformity with the social rules of conduct and action may be regarded as normal. If your private desires are in
conformity with the public outward accepted etiquettes of society, then you may be regarded as normal.

But here we pause a little and think a little deeper. We have before us the gates of a deeper psychology which is known in India, with which the Western psychoanalyst is totally unfamiliar. We cannot say that society is the reality and we have only to be in conformity with its rules, because what is society? What is it made of? It is made of people like me, like you. There is no such thing as society, really speaking, though for all purposes of psychological studies we accept the existence of such a thing as society. Really speaking, the society that we speak of is only an agreement of ideas or notions among a set of people who may form a community of their own. If there is no such agreement of notions or ideas among people, we cannot call that set of people as a society because there is nothing common among them. The perception of objects, which is the cause of the impressions formed in the mind, is the fact to be analysed and studied, whether or not the conditions within our own minds are in conformity with the accepted rules of conduct outside in society.

The psychology of yoga, especially as propounded by the system of Maharishi Patanjali, is a far deeper science than any kind of psychoanalysis. Patanjali himself was a great psychoanalyst. He was, in many senses, the great grandfather of people like Freud. While the Western way of thinking harps on the reality of external society, and regards that as normal conduct and behaviour which is in conformity with the accepted rules of society outside, Patanjali plumbs the very depths of human nature. Here begins the psychology of yoga, which is quite different from and deeper than the general psychology studied in our institutions such as abnormal psychology, industrial psychology, individual psychology, educational psychology, etc. – all branches of this fundamental psychology of yoga.

Patanjali, the great yogi, tells us that we are confronted by the objects of the world and we are not merely in conformity with them, as ordinary psychology tells us. We are never in conformity with anything in this world. It would be an impossibility because our real nature is not merely the mind. Yoga psychology does not believe that the essential nature of man is the mind, while to the Westerner the highest reality is the mind. Sometimes they identify the mind with the soul and soul with the mind, not knowing that there can be something other than the mind which is the precursor and the precondition of the mind itself.

The mind is a system of thinking, and thinking is a process of activity. A particular type of activity which is connected with the objects of sense is called mentation. The mind is a systematised form of activity which synthesises the perceptions of the senses and passes a judgment on this synthesis arrived at through the perception of the senses. The mind is not an indivisible unit of being, but rather a process of activity, but we cannot say that we are bundles of activities. Can you ever regard yourself as a
process of action? Are you not something by yourself? Have you not a status of your own? Have you not a core or a pith which is different from movements of any kind, even if they be activities of a subtle character?

The yoga psychology discovers the existence of a primordial nature at the bottom of the human nature, the human being, prior to the action of the mind, the mind being merely a telephone operator which connects and disconnects itself from relationships with the various objects of the world. As long as the mind is in relation with the objects of the world positively in the form of love or negatively in the form of hatred, the human mind shall be in a state of tension. Psychological tension is nothing but a state of affairs wherein we are unable to make an ultimate judgment. We are placed in a state of indecision. We postpone the decision, adjourn the judgment, inasmuch as we are not in a mood or understanding adequate enough to properly assess the nature of our relationships with the things of the world.

We are in a very peculiar world indeed. We are not in a simple world of static objects. We are in a world of flexible and malleable forces which enter into each other. Forces come in contact with one another and influence us, and we are an inseparable part of this very world of such forces.

So the psychology of yoga attempts at a disintegration of the component parts of the mind so that the true being of man may be realised directly by immediate experience. This immediate experience is known as sakshatkara or aparoksha anubhava. Any kind of mediate perception cannot be a knowledge of your own nature because you cannot know yourself as an object. You are not an object to your own self; you are the subject of the analysis and knowledge of other things in the world. But if you are to know your own self, how would you employ the means of perception or knowledge? There is no means of communication between your own real nature and the ultimate means of knowledge which will be able to reveal this true nature of yours.

The yoga psychology starts with that conclusion with which Western psychology ends. This is very interesting. The highest conclusion and discovery of Western psychology is the starting point of Eastern psychology, especially the psychology of yoga. While the psychoanalyst and the psychologist of the West tell us that the world of society is the reality with which you have to conform in order that you may be psychologically normal, yoga psychology tells us that here you begin your study of your real nature. Patanjali is a great guide to us in this respect.

According to yoga psychology, the consciousness of an object is not a natural state of things. To be conscious of an object is not a happy thing. You need not pat yourself on your back merely because you are able to see something outside very clearly. Yoga will pity you rather than applaud you or give you a certificate because you are seeing an object outside.
The seeing of an object outside, or the consciousness of something external, is regarded in yoga as an unnatural condition of consciousness. Why is it unnatural? You see how yoga psychology differs from Western psychology. The Western psychologist would be happy to be aware of as many things in the world as possible. That is why he tries to go to the moon and to Jupiter, and so on. But we pity ourselves if that should be the state of affairs in our case.

To be conscious of an object is to dissect consciousness into an unnatural partition, bits of what are called the I and the you. There is no distinction within consciousness itself. This is what the yoga psychology tells us. In fact, yoga, which is based on the great philosophical system called the Sankhya, opines that this essential nature of yours, which is called consciousness, is the purusha of the philosophers. You are called a purusha, which means you are an impartite, indivisible unit of being – not a mind, which is only a psychological activity. This unit of being which is your bottommost nature is consciousness.

You may ask me, why is it called consciousness? Because there can be nothing prior to consciousness. It is impossible to conceive anything which is behind consciousness. If one is to imagine the existence of something as the cause of consciousness or behind consciousness, something superior to consciousness, I would ask, “Who is conscious of this?” Who tells you that there is something behind consciousness? Consciousness itself. There is no death of consciousness. That is why they say the essential nature of man is immortal. You cannot conceive your own death. Even the conception of death is a state of consciousness which exists. If consciousness were not to be at the background of even the notion of your self-annihilation, that very notion itself would have been impossible. The very fact of their being such a consciousness of finitude or limitation proves, according to yoga, that you are not finite. If you are really finite, you will not be aware that you are finite. This is a great secret that you have to know. One who knows he is a fool is not a fool. A real fool does not know that he is a fool. If you can be aware that you are limited, you have exceeded that limitation by the very fact of the assertion.

Yoga tells us that the urge for unlimitedness is a proof of the unlimited basis of human nature. This is the purusha of yoga. This purusha that we really are is conscious, and yet it is indivisible. To be indivisible means not to have anything external to it. If there can be anything external to us, then we are finite, and consciousness would be limited. But we infer by the process of logical deduction that the consciousness of limitation is a self-refutation of its own self. We refute that notion of our being finite by saying that we are finite. The essence of man is immortal existence, and yoga is the art of contacting this immortal being in our own self.

For this, Patanjali Maharaj suggests methods of dissociation of ideas from contact with the objects, which is called vairagya in his technical parlance. Vairagya does not
mean becoming a baba or putting on rags or walking about in a burlap sheet. It means a psychological dissociation of the mind from contact with things outside. When you gaze, you do not see anything because the mind has permeated the very existence of the object. This expansion of the ambit of the activity of the mind or the ken of consciousness is the beginning of the practice of yoga. And yoga psychology tells us that we have only two tasks before us. Yoga is very sympathetic with us, very compassionate. It knows our own weaknesses, so it does not terrify us. My dear friends, you have only to do two things to be a good yogi. You have to free yourself from two kinds of thoughts. These thoughts Patanjali calls the *kleshas*. Just look at the wonderment of it. He regards the very process of the thought of the human being as a *klesha*, or an affliction. To think is to be afflicted. It is not a happy thing. Here is the difference of Eastern and Western psychology. While to them to think is happiness, to us to think is to be in sorrow. That is why in yoga psychology the term *klesha* is used in respect of thought processes.

There are two kinds of afflictions: the afflictions which cause immediate pain to you, and the afflictions which do not cause immediate pain to you but later on throw you into a pit. There are people who openly appear as enemies. You can understand them. But there are people who appear as friends, and then cut your throat. These painless or so-called harmless afflictions are friends on the surface and enemies at the bottom. The painful afflictions are the immediate enemies that come openly with drawn swords. You have to be free from these two types of psychological affliction.

Patanjali gives a series, an enumeration, or a list of these afflictions or thought processes, the painful as well as the painless. To mistake the non-eternal for the eternal, to regard this transient world of objects as real, to mistake a sensory irritation for pleasure, to regard yourself as an object of perception – Patanjali groups all this under a category called *avidya*, ignorance, root and branch. This misconception that you have in respect of things outside, by which you are not able to judge them properly, engenders self-consciousness or egoism. You become personally conscious of your body and are intent upon the pleasures of the body, and all your fights and quarrels in life are only to protect the body and to pamper it with sensory enjoyment.

This self-consciousness which is easily connected with bodily existence engenders again *kama*, *krodha*, *raga*, *dvesha* – like-dislike. You cannot be impartial in respect of anything. You have always something to say about it, for or against. On account of this entanglement psychologically, you become fond of your own physical life and dread death. The very name of death is frightening. Why? Because death means the annihilation of your bodily personality which is mistaken for the self, and so you feel that your very existence would be wiped out when death comes. Thus, there is fear of death and love of physical life. Patanjali calls all of these the set of painful afflictions.
They cause you agony daily and you can detect them because they are there, coming as enemies.

But there are subtler, more powerful involvements of our psychological nature which are not immediately causing pain to us but which are dangerous in their operations. There begins the higher stratum of yoga. While the attempt at the overcoming of these painful afflictions may be called lower yoga, the art of overcoming the higher afflictions is more advanced yoga. Patanjali gives a description of both these types of yoga – the initial stage of it and its more advanced form.

In the higher form of yoga, you free yourself not merely from the clutches of the painful afflictions, but also from the painless thought processes even in the form of the thought of objects outside. This is a very difficult thing to explain, so I shall only sum up by giving you an idea as to what yoga is according to Sage Patanjali. It is the expansion of your self – your own self, not somebody else’s – to its farthest possible reaches, by which Patanjali means that the self is not restricted by the existence of other things outside. Even the world cannot restrict it. Even the largeness of this entire creation cannot be a limitation on yourself. The purusha is superior to prakriti, says yoga, and when the processes of the mind are subjugated by citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ (Y.S. 1.2), which is defined as yoga, you rest in your own nature, which is far superior to the entanglements of the world. Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam (Y.S. 1.3). In two sutras the whole yoga is described. You need not go into further details at all. Yoga is the process of the sublimation of all the thought processes of the individual, as a consequence of which, one rests in the eternal nature of one’s own self. You become stabilised in your own consciousness, and then it is that you become master of the powers of nature. Instead of the world controlling you, you begin to control the world. The powers of the yogis are nothing but their attunement with the powers of nature.

May I introduce you to this glorious science with this small request and humble prayer that you take to the study of the science and psychology of yoga honestly, and giving enough time for it so that your life may become blessed and you may live as a true human being, a veritable representative of divinity in this world for your own good as well as the good of all people.